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Examining conviviality and cultural mediation in arts-based workshops with child language brokers: Narrations of identity and (un)belonging

Sarah Crafter and Humera Iqbal

Introduction

The concept of conviviality has usually been applied to contexts such as urban neighbourhoods of diversity (Gidley 2013; Lapiņa 2016; Valluvan 2016), and refers to what Gidley (2013) would term the ‘convivial turn’, or the notion of living together or coexisting in our daily social interactions (Wise and Velayutham 2013). The application of conviviality explored in this chapter concerns everyday encounters (Fincher et al. 2014), or what Amin (2002, 959) calls ‘the micropublics of everyday social contact’. ‘Micropublics’ are sites of (sometimes compulsory) conviviality, such as workplaces, schools (Neal et al. 2016), youth centres and community groups (Neal et al. 2015). In this vein, our lens of focus in this paper is on what Neal et al. (2016, 465) would describe as ‘extended encounters’, namely a series of arts-based workshops with students in a culturally and linguistically diverse school in London.

The substantive focus of the research study on which this paper is based explored feelings of identity, belonging and cultural mediation among child language brokers. Child language brokers are children and young people who linguistically and culturally mediate between family

members and officialdom (Antonini 2010). The arts-based workshops with our child language brokers, and their subsequent outputs, are the centre point for what Illich (1973) might term ‘tools for conviviality’. Our analytic endeavours explore the ‘autonomous and creative intercourse among persons’ (Illich 1973, 11), namely the young people taking part in the workshops, wherein there were possibilities to share, connect and interact. In exploring one of the arts-based workshops for this paper we ask, what role did the artist delivering the workshop have on the output, and how did that unfolding process reflect our research objectives?

Child language brokering as a culturally mediated activity

Our study with child language brokers did not set out to use the concept of conviviality. However, child language brokering as a practice is useful for exploring micropublics because their role often involves the transmission of cultural knowledge between different parties in a conversation or meeting (Jones and Trickett 2005). Language brokers are often said to be something akin to a ‘cultural broker’ because they both culturally and linguistically mediate between the private world of family and the public world of institutions and officialdom. The spaces and contexts where brokering take place are wide-ranging, and include the home, retail, healthcare, police situations, immigration and welfare contexts, housing, school and many more (see Valdés 2003; Tse 1996). The status of child language brokers as young people interacting in adult settings, and across a range of culturally diverse spaces, developed into questions about how they negotiated and managed those exchanges, and what impact this might have on their identities. It is important to note that child language brokers do not seek an objective translation, as a professional interpreter would seek to do. Rather, child language brokers often advocate on behalf of family members, and therefore bring a different set of responsibilities and agendas (Crafter, Cline and Prokopiou 2017).

While previous research had suggested that child language brokers mediate different forms of cultural knowledge, values and norms during their language brokering, there was little in the way of systematic evidence to demonstrate this process. With a few exceptions (see Cline et al. 2010; Reynolds and Orellana 2009), the field had a somewhat dichotomous approach to child language brokering, presenting it in either positive or negative terms, rather than as a complex practice that is mediational, nuanced and multidimensional (Cline et al. 2010). We

were conscious that in previous research, young people had struggled to articulate, verbalise and find examples of how they culturally mediated knowledge through brokering – although they insisted it was a practice they undertook. To this end, we turned to arts-based approaches in an attempt to capture this elusive mediational process. However, the art was to form a dual function. For the purposes of our research, we were interested in how the production of the art during the workshops acted as a mediational activity for conversations about identity, belonging and language brokering. Equally, we committed to exhibiting the outputs with the aim of making the practice of language brokering more visible. We explore, therefore, how the workshop acted as a space of conviviality among a diverse group of young people. Before going on to discuss two of the arts-based projects that form the focus of this paper, we first turn towards some of the theoretical thinking that has underpinned this research.

Conviviality, contact zones and child language brokering

Our study was not about super-diverse geographies, but encounters led by acts of child language brokering across different contexts (Wise and Velayutham 2013), such as the school setting (Nayak 2017). Child language brokers, in their routine acts of translation for family and peers, undertake both fleeting and sustained encounters within complex populations and across a range of different public and private spaces. Amin (2013) discusses how different others (or ‘collaborative strangers’) can unite in ‘joint endeavour’ to achieve a particular outcome but without the expectation that close ties would necessarily develop. When young people broker, often there is a close tie between the person they are translating on behalf of, but this is not always the case for those that they are translating to. Yet, this can result in a joint endeavour between all parties to understand situations and messages.

At a young age, child language brokers may develop the know-how of the urban etiquette required for managing complex interactions with adult ‘others’, which some argue to be an important skill (Valentine 2008; Noble 2009). Of course, children are forced to develop this know-how rapidly on arrival to the new country (sometimes they get it wrong too). The literature on encounter talks about routine and mundane everyday interactions and negotiation (Hemming 2011; Amin 2013). Yet while these acts of negotiation may be a normative experience for the child language broker and their family, this may not be a ‘normative’ or

comfortable interaction between the child language broker and the adult official with whom they are interacting on behalf of family. Moreover, these interactions may take place in challenging contexts such as hospitals, police stations and even law offices.

It is in these social landscapes that the cultural contact zone has relevance. The inception of the concept of the 'cultural contact zone' is widely attributed to the work of Mary Pratt (1991), who used the term 'to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt 1991, 33). In many respects, this definition holds many resonances with the experiences of child language brokers because they are invariably the bridge between the social spheres where such cultural meetings might take place. There is a high likelihood that the adult 'other' will belong to a different cultural background to the broker or their family, and given that conversations happen in a variety of contentious spaces (such as housing, welfare offices and immigration offices), there is the potential for 'clash' and 'grapple'. And our work is with children and young people, who, by virtue of their age status, enter into an asymmetrical power relationship.

As Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) suggest, conviviality and conflict can be close bedfellows. For example, using Pratt's (1991) notion of a cultural contact zone within the classroom, Malsbary (2014, 3) suggests that they can be spaces of 'possibility and dignity that counter anti-immigrant sentiment'. Additionally, the everyday encounters experienced by child language brokers are not without the racialised tensions that may also be said to make up convivial spaces (Nayak 2017). The approach to conviviality suggested by Gilroy (2006) was to look beyond ethnic categorisation towards (un)shared practices, such as taste, lifestyle and leisure preferences. We would like to draw attention to the term 'practice' here, which refers to what people *do* (Miller and Goodnow 1995): the actions and activities that are embedded in everyday life that are an essential feature of identity and belonging within communities (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Child language brokering is, we suggest, a cultural practice that takes place in cultural contact zones across a variety of settings. Some have argued that the act of brokering leads to the development of competencies in understanding social norms or 'social capacity' of young people to negotiate and manoeuvre themselves and family in such settings (Hall 2015; Noble 2015; Onyx et al. 2011).

Our work focuses on how child language brokering as a practice acts as a mediator for identity and belonging. We sought to find research tools with which to explore a phenomenon that young people can find difficult to verbalise. It was with this in mind that we turned to arts-based

methods and the role such approaches have for creating spaces for young people to discuss a practice (child language brokering) that is often invisible or unacknowledged. This chapter examines cultural contact zones on two levels: first, those engendered by the workshop processes, and then those developed by the artistic outputs.

The use of arts-based methods for exploring child language brokering

The use of arts by social science researchers has come under considerable scrutiny in recent years. Often this has centred on the legitimacy of blurring the boundaries between social science and art. Taking our cue from Roberts (2008), we perceive our work as a performative social science:

... where music, dance, video, poetry, or drama are being used as part of the 'tools' of the qualitative researcher, the 'performative' should be conceived as a 'provisional' or 'shorthand' term: to describe the collection, organisation and dissemination of research which moves beyond traditional modes, such as the text based journal article or overhead presentation.

(Roberts 2008, n.p.)

Our 'performative turn' involved undertaking social science research through artistic modes or attempting to explore artistic practices. Our approach, therefore, was to use a combination of traditional social science methods (surveying, interviews, observations) alongside other art forms (audio diaries, drawing, sculpture, podcasting, film) to create new meanings and, in some senses, to develop what Springgay et al. (2005) would term 'a/r/tography', a link between art and ethnography.

Not confident with our ability to be both artists and social science researchers, we sought to collaborate with professional artists and organisations (see Roberts 2008), and, in one instance, an art therapist. Significantly, our aim was to use the arts workshops as a medium for exploring the conversations about migration, language brokering and identity during the workshops. The end product was important, in as much as we promised to put together school-based exhibitions of this output. In terms of the aim of the research, we saw the art workshops as playing a mediational role for social interaction and dialogue (Mand 2012).

Our research context

We initially collected data from five schools in two areas of the UK: London and Hampshire. For various reasons, such as contact teachers leaving our target schools for other jobs, our arts-based part of the study ended up taking place in two London schools. The arts-based task discussed in this chapter took place in an all-girls faith school in the south of London, which we have called Murray Green School. Of all the schools in our sample, this was the oldest, and was situated in a highly affluent and gentrified area. However, this was not reflective of the student body, who were highly diverse according to social class, ethnicity and language. It was not uncommon for students to travel from other areas of London because the school was faith-based and single-sex. According to the last official government inspection report (conducted by Ofsted in 2013), nine tenths of the children in the school came from minority ethnic backgrounds. This report also rated the school as ‘outstanding’.¹

Our contacts within the school were an English as an additional language (EAL) coordinator, who we will call Lucia, and one of the teaching assistants on her team, who we have named Fernanda. We had known Lucia for several years because she had been involved in a previous study on child language brokering in schools (<http://child-language-brokering.weebly.com/>). When we started this research, Lucia was trying to set up a young interpreter club and asked for our help. We regularly visited the young interpreter club and, over time, built a steady rapport with the girls who attended, many of whom took part in various aspects of our project. Fernanda had been in the classroom on several occasions when we visited. After hearing us talk to the young people about the research and our desire to run an arts-based workshop, Fernanda approached us and introduced herself to us as someone who worked as a freelance artist outside of her role as a part-time teaching assistant. She expressed an interest in being involved, and we subsequently asked her if she would like the opportunity to run a workshop.

Using sculpture to explore the identities of child language brokers

Fernanda was of Argentinian origin, and specialised in identity-based art. The artist’s own identity and sense of belonging featured strongly in the task that she developed. Fernanda’s workshop was based around

Ex-votos. Ex-voto refers to a devotional offering made to a saint or divinity, usually deposited in places of worship such as churches, and often around religious shrines. They take multiple forms, including texts, paintings and symbols, including the modelled replica of a healed body part.

Fernanda built on this concept and developed a set of workshops for the young interpreters to create a plaster hand that would be painted and engraved with symbols and imagery related to their identity as a language broker. Fernanda's aim was to explore the cultural assets that the young people brought with them as a means of counteracting the anti-immigrant talk that she felt permeated society. She talked about some of the negative homogeneous stereotypes attributed to 'immigrants'. The undecorated hand, while being a clearly defined object, was to her mind an opportunity for the young people to bring their own 'particularities' or identities to the design. She discussed how the young people would be able to combine this in multiple ways: written words (which would allow for expressions of language), objects (to express their cultures and personalities) and images (to incorporate description and information). The hand represented the idea of being able to help others (through translation), but also reflected their need to be helped. The aim was to develop an object that would be a symbolic portrait of themselves. The artist had also taken into account the faith-based nature of the school in developing this task.

The workshop was designed to take place over five sessions across 10 weeks within the school. Initially, these sessions were intended to last two hours each. However, the school context made timetabling difficult, and the young people had five main sessions during school hours and were able to complete their hands in their own time, often with the help of Fernanda. The workshops took place in the art room of the school, to which Fernanda had to negotiate access. She told us that she was very conscious that, as an EAL teaching assistant, she did not have a high status in the school. The art teachers did not know about her own freelance background, and Fernanda was nervous of their presence in the art room during the workshops.

The group was made up of nine girls aged between 13 and 15 years. All of the participants acted as a child language broker for family regularly, although some were more active than others. Most of the girls had taken part in one-to-one interviews prior to being part of the workshops. Others had been selected by Lucia to take part in the workshop because they were struggling to be part of the school community in various ways. See [Table 5.1](#) for details of the participating students.

Table 5.1 Student participants

Name	Country of origin	Age arrived in England	Family languages other than English
Jola	Poland	6 years old	Polish – regular broker for her mother
Sofia	Colombia	Unknown	Spanish
Valeria	Ecuador	Unknown	Spanish – regular broker for her mother
Marina	Ecuador, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain	11 years old	Spanish – regular broker for her mother and aunt
Ofelia	Ecuador, but came to the UK after some time living in Spain	9 years old	Spanish – regular broker for her immediate family
Pilar	Ecuador and Columbia	Unknown	Spanish – regular broker for her immediate family
Karina	Ecuador	Unknown	Spanish – regular broker for her immediate family
Kitty	China	Born in the UK, but early years spent in China. Return age unknown	Mandarin – translates for a grandparent
Ania	Poland	Unknown	Polish – translates less frequently

Process of production: The role of the artist

Fernanda's own bilingualism, and her familiarity with many of the students (as she had worked at the school for several months), enabled her to rapidly gain a level of trust with the group. This was apparent at the very first workshop, and she was able to use this relationship to get many of the girls to express their feelings and experiences about migration and translating, while also teaching them basic casting, carving, drawing and painting techniques.

The sessions were structured as follows: Session 1: Exploring identity; Session 2: Show and tell; Session 3: Creation; Sessions 4 and 5: Completion of work.

Session 1: In the first session, Fernanda introduced herself, the creative process, what the workshop would produce and how this related to identity. She asked them identity-based questions (for example, what has been their general feeling since being in England/London), and each of



Figure 5.1 Fernanda shows the group how to create an ‘identity-map’ reflecting their feelings on their country of origin, the UK, and ‘now’.
Source: Pia Jaime

the girls produced a mind map with three sections on it: my country of origin, UK, and now (see [Figure 5.1](#)). At the end of the session, they also made their plaster-cast hands.

Session 2: For session 2, each of the students taking part had been asked to bring an object to the workshop that held power and importance in their lives (see [Figure 5.2](#)). Fernanda described these as objects that were ‘close to their heart’. In turn, they talked about why the object was important and how it affected them. Objects included family photographs (from times before migration, or during visits back to their home country), items of jewellery, and awards and medals from personal achievements since they had come to the UK. One respondent (Ofelia) brought a book of messages and letters from her family in Ecuador, written in Spanish, which she had collected since she migrated. One student (Marina) chose her glasses because they were the one object that had accompanied her throughout all her migration journeys. Throughout, each student shared personal accounts and key moments around their sense of belonging and self. Fernanda described how important this stage was to the group because she felt that they needed a lot of support early on in the process ‘so that they could bloom’. The task was important as it opened up a sense of trust in the group, and a sense of sharing. Following this, Fernanda asked them to think about how they would like to decorate their sculptures. She showed examples of her own sculptures.



Figure 5.2 In this picture, Kitty has brought in some bracelets as her ‘objects of importance’. Source: Pia Jaime

Session 3: Between Sessions 2 and 3, all the group (including the authors) had gone away and sketched out their hand designs on paper (see Figure 5.3). Much of Session 3 was spent discussing what we had drawn, the stories behind the detail, and what they meant to each person. It is likely that the authors’ narratives had quite a strong influence on how the young people moved forward with their accounts, as they included talk about family (including the recent loss of a grandfather), which seemed to pave the way for the group to do the same. It was in this session that the students began the process of decorating their hands.



Figure 5.3 In this picture, Ania is telling the rest of the group about her sketch of her hand sculpture. Source: Pia Jaime

Session 3, as well as Sessions 4 and 5 involved developing the sculptures. Fernanda began the session by talking about the details of their pieces. She reminded the group of the special objects they had brought with them to the previous session and asked them to think about how they might represent these visually. The authors spent time with each student, talking about their artwork and questioning them about what they had decided to do and what it meant to them. Fernanda provided a lot of support with this. For many of the sculptures, she applied her own carvings and finishing touches to their hands with the permission of the students during the extra sessions that she laid on when the authors were absent. Fernanda also asked the authors to support some of the girls who had less-developed ideas and, as such, they become an integral part both of what was generated by the students and of the discussions during production.

Following completion of the hands, each student was asked if she would be filmed describing her work. By this point in the project, we had spent a considerable amount of time with the language brokers, and they felt comfortable with our film-maker. Also, the hands were exhibited at the end of the study as part of two school exhibitions about child language brokers.

Tools used by Fernanda in the process of production

During the workshops, Fernanda used a range of dialogical and embodied tools for eliciting discussions about self and identity in the young people. It is interesting to note the means by which she introduced herself to the students in the first workshop. Most of the students were either vaguely or highly familiar with her role as an EAL teaching assistant within the school. During the first workshop, however, she deliberately introduced herself as a freelance artist, a migrant to the UK, and bilingual. In turn, the young people followed her lead and discussed their own language and migration origin. She shared her artwork, family details and personal stories. Over the course of the process, they became closer and the group began calling her by her first name,² and spent a considerable amount of time with her outside of lesson time.

Although Fernanda continually struggled to negotiate the use of the art room for the workshops, the use of this space added a sense of legitimacy to the task. We learned from Fernanda that the art teachers in the school had originally been sceptical of the process. Yet over time, they became increasingly more interested and appreciative of the workshops

and Fernanda's role as an artist (rather than as a teaching assistant) in that space. Fernanda also used the space to enact a sense of conviviality through joint endeavour (Amin 2002). She always moved the room around, so that the group was in a fairly small 'circle of trust'. Coupled with the small size of the group, this seemed to help facilitate personal stories about family and migration. From the outset, Fernanda was very animated, passionate and positive about the girls and their backgrounds. She told jokes, often teased the girls in a friendly way, and offered a lot of encouragement and smiles. She made references to her own Argentinian background and used Spanish words in the conversation from time to time.

With the two authors, Fernanda privately discussed feelings of frustration about the school because her invisible identity as an artist left her feeling that her true potential was not being recognised. This workshop seemed to be a way for her to cement her position as an artist within the school. We became very aware, over the course of the workshops, how important it was for the arts-based workshops to be perceived as a success by colleagues at the school. She had strong ties to the language brokers through her teaching assistant role and, importantly, she empathised with them because of her own migration experience. In our interview with Fernanda when the workshops had finished, she told us, 'I think it [the workshop] will change the perception of this school, of them [the students]'. This impacted on how much input she had with each artefact developed by each young person. Since our focus was on the discussions and narratives deriving from the workshop spaces, this was not considered a problem, but it did alter what kinds of stories were imprinted on to the final product. Such imprinting on children's creative processes has been one of the critiques of the arts-based participatory movement within social science (Lomax 2012).

The outputs: Contact zones and convivialities

For the purpose of this chapter, we will discuss the cases of Ofelia and Jola. We selected these cases because both of these girls were able to speak to issues related to being a young translator, and wider issues about what it means to be a migrant and a teenager in school. Their stories clearly contextualise language brokering against a wider picture, while simultaneously touching on deeply emotive issues about their lives.

The hand decorated by Ofelia is shown in Figure 5.4. At first, Ofelia had struggled to begin decorating her sculpture. While many of the others started working on their pieces straightaway, Ofelia sat for a long



Figure 5.4a–c These photographs capture the final design of Ofelia's hand sculpture. Source: Pia Jaime

while staring at her blank plaster and looking around the table at the rest of the group. In the end, the first author asked her about the object she had brought to Session 2 (letters from her family in Ecuador), which led her to expand on her discussions about family more generally. Her focus on family manifested itself in two ways: through the discussion of a dead brother, whom she had never met, and through letters sent to her from family in Ecuador.

When Ofelia told the narrative of her hand, she divided it into two halves. The white, colourful speckled part, she told us, represented her 'cheerfulness', a part of her identity that she took from her mother. The young boy represented her brother, who had died at around the age of 1 or 2 years, whom she had never met. Her stories about her brother were given to her by her mother, and although Ofelia had never met him, he appeared as an absent presence on her sculpture (Roseneil and Ketokivi 2016). She had never met him, but she thought about him a lot, and discussed that she had purposely put him at the juncture of the light colour and the night-sky part of the hand. The stars within the night sky represented the descriptions of her 'lost' brother given to her by her mother.

A booklet full of writing made up a significant element of her sculpture narrative. On her sculpture, she had transcribed some of the letters and personal messages from family back in Ecuador in Spanish. The letters were full of family in-jokes, such as an aunt writing to say in a humorous way that she thought that Ofelia had 'forgotten her'. Her uncle wrote a joke about her eyes, because the last time she had seen him in Ecuador, she had broken her glasses. Her cousin told stories from when they used

to live together as small children. The collection of letters, and her choice to include it as part of her sculpture, represents her ties of belonging and links to her family in Ecuador. It points to transnational kinship links and the maintenance of identity through shared communication (Moskal 2015; Moskal and Tyrrell 2016). It also points to the importance of language in maintaining these ties, especially as it was placed in the centre of the sculpture. Both the links to her dead brother, whom she meets only through her mother's stories about him, and the letters from family in a different country, represent the distal and proximate relationships that sit at the heart of spaces of care in relationships (Bowlby 2012).

The hand decorated by Jola is shown in Figure 5.5. From the beginning, Jola seemed more confident with the stories she wanted to overlay on her hand sculpture. Her choices were decisive and, like Ofelia, featured family as an important theme. To a greater extent than Ofelia, Jola incorporated aspects of her self-identity into her story. For example, she used feathers to represent the nickname 'fluffy', which one of her teachers had given her. She liked this nickname, as she felt that this represented her enjoyment of affection: both giving and receiving hugs and affection. Some of Jola's depictions, namely a semi-colon symbol, which she would like to have as a tattoo in the future, represent issues of emotional and mental health. She talked about sometimes feeling down and depressed, but also striving to be positive like her mother. Another symbol linked to the concept of infinite happiness. The large skull represented a key ring



Figure 5.5a–b These photographs capture the final design of Jola's hand sculpture. Source: Pia Jaime

she owned, which she brought into the session as one of her significant objects, and this represented what she called her 'dark side'.

Like Ofelia, language featured as part of the narrative she overlaid on her sculpture. She included her two favourite words in her home language, which also reflected an affective element of her identity: *miłość* (which means love) and *śmiech* (which means laughter). Jola was a keen writer, and had written verses from her poetry across the hand. However, she deliberately wrote those in pencil to reflect how she usually kept her poetry hidden from most people.

Her narrative around family focused on two key people in her life: her mother and her grandfather. Her mother was symbolised by the green thumbprint because she said she loved gardening. Her descriptions of her mother also linked to her infinite happiness tattoo symbol. She described her mother as someone who experienced the loss of a child, the death of family members and the loss of home, but who always managed to stay positive. Jola strived to be like her. The narrative of her grandfather was symbolised by the piano keys at the bottom of her piece. When her grandfather was 6 years old, the Second World War broke out and, while out one day, he got separated from his family in Warsaw and lost. He was taken into an orphanage, where there was a grand piano. Jola told us that he taught himself how to play without sheet music. Jola's description of her grandfather speaks to the importance of intergenerational shared remembering regarding important life events in the family (Svob et al. 2016).

What arts-based workshops might tell us about conviviality in the contact zone

In this chapter, we have examined how a series of arts-based workshops with child language brokers could be conceived as a micropublic site of conviviality that is representative of a communal commitment and joint endeavour (Amin 2013). Or, as Nowicka and Vertovec (2014) put it, they reflect more on the 'with' of conviviality than the 'living' of 'living together' (Gidley 2013). In doing so, we asked what role did the artist play as a 'tool of conviviality' when delivering the workshops, and how did that unfolding process reflect our research objectives? As conflict and conviviality can be close bedfellows (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014), we suggest that child language brokering, as a practice, operates in contact zones that can reflect conflictual power inequalities. As such, language brokering encounters in the public sphere can be both facilitative and

agonistic. Micropublics such as a school classroom also pose as potential sites for racialised tension (Pratt 1991). In this instance, though, we suggest that the arts-based workshop enabled, perhaps even manufactured, the close ties that developed among the young people within the space.

Arguably, Fernanda was a central navigator or mediator for the young people's convivial experience. She facilitated the workshop as a convivial space by situating herself in relation to the students – she was also a migrant to the UK, she shared a language with many of the girls, she talked about some of her own difficulties of being in a 'new land'. She sometimes spoke in Spanish, of her own home and life in Argentina. She brought the students together in a close-knit circle, and this encouraged people to talk about their stories. It is likely that the authors also influenced the sessions by bringing their own stories about family, loss and love, and, in the case of the second author, migration experiences. We left the choice of artistic endeavour to Fernanda, who felt that the hand sculpture acted as a symbolic tool on to which the young people could imprint their own 'particularities'. When Illich (1973) wrote about 'tools for conviviality', he was not particularly specific about his meaning (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014), although he did refer to the process of 'creative intercourse among persons' (Illich 1973, 11). However, 'tools' seem to be perceived as political tools, physical objects and ways of being. This bears some resemblance to the way 'cultural tools' are treated in Vygotskian sociocultural theorising (Vygotsky 1978), where tools can be something symbolic such as language, or an object, such as a textbook. They are both historical and social. One facet of the use of cultural tools is the means by which they act as the mediator for social practice, linking the concrete actions of individuals and groups (de Abreu and Elbers 2005).

The artistic medium (namely a plaster hand sculpture) might be criticised for being adult-led, rather than being driven by the children (Lomax 2012). On reflection, though, we believe this removed some of the participatory pressure on the young people during the activity. Some of the students, such as Ofelia, struggled to begin decorating their sculpture, and needed prompting with questions. This could partly have been because she was intimidated by beginning something 'artistic', or it could have related to the use of the hand as a base for developing ideas further. However, it may also reflect broader difficulties we had encountered in talking to young people about migration and about their home languages. When we first entered our participating schools to undertake our research, many of the young people were reluctant to talk about their home languages and their migration journeys. School, as a space or location for undertaking any research, and in particular arts-based

approaches, is not without its problems. On the one hand, schools offer a unique opportunity for the development of connective conviviality because they can be sites of common experiences (Nayak 2017; Neal et al. 2016). On the other hand, for students, information about home is something they often like to keep very private and separate from their school life, making disclosure difficult (Crafter, Cline, de Abreu and O'Dell 2017). We found, however, that the use of this arts-based approach opened up a space for discussion about migration, identity and language that did not present itself in our regular meetings with students in their form groups. One explanation is that the fairly long duration of the workshops (five sessions across approximately eight weeks) created a slowly developing sense of trust. The group was small, they had language brokering as a shared endeavour, and they had already begun tentative steps in creating a young interpreters club. Those who took part in Fernanda's workshop not only dedicated themselves to developing their artwork – often going into the art room during their breaks and after school to work on their pieces – but they also continued to attend events related to the research, particularly our exhibitions. They brought family along and, in some instances, took the initiative in talking to the general public about the stories overlaying their sculptures. We would suggest that this was in part born out of Fernanda's ability to create a communal space of conviviality.

Our personal interest was not so much in the artefact itself, but rather in the messages, stories and discourses that the workshop generated. Arguably, the nature of the artefact was less conducive for fulfilling the role of our research. While we were interested in the narratives born out of the activity, using the artefact (the hand) as a mediational device perhaps limited direct talk about language-brokering experiences. We suggest that an art workshop has great potential for creating spaces of conviviality that, while beneficial for those involved, might not entirely fulfil the needs of the research. Therefore, there is more to learn about both the role of the facilitator and the kind of arts-based task that might maximise tools for conviviality in research. Here, we have also detailed some of the narratives that came about through participation in the workshops. We chose to focus on two of the respondents' stories, those of Ofelia and Jola, because of their shared themes around gains, losses, migration, love and family. While language brokering did not feature in their stories per se, language is one thread running through both of their narrations and tied into identity. Both Ofelia's and Jola's stories have care, caring relationships and family as a thematic central thread (Bowlby 2012). Like many care relationships relating to migration, they

are experienced as both distal and proximate, so that the young people's narratives are built around symbols and artefacts that offer connections across large and small geographical locations (Atkinson et al. 2011). Like many care relationships, the past, present and future are linked across the life course. Both Ofelia and Jola overlaid on to their artwork the stories they had been told of family now absent, whose presence remains in the telling of who they were. We suggest there may be some value in taking further the concept of 'care' and how it might relate to tools and spaces of conviviality.

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Notes

1. All state schools in the UK are judged by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). There are four potential outcomes, with 'inadequate' being the lowest and 'outstanding' being the highest.
2. Fernanda explained to us that in her own language her first name meant to 'cheep', like a bird, so the girls in the classroom would get her attention in the style of a bird. She had disliked this as a child, but warmed to the 'pet name' when it was used by the girls in the workshop.

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